



Whitstable Junior School

Physical Intervention and Physical Contact with Children Policy

Governors' Committee Responsible: Curriculum Committee

Policy Originator: Headteacher

Status: Non-Statutory

Review Period: 2 yearly

Date approved: January 2023

Next review date: January 2025

Rationale

This policy has been adopted with reference to the Department for Schools guidelines on the use of the physical restraint of pupils (DFE 2013). We have also linked this to our Safeguarding, Behaviour, Special Needs and Child Protection Policies.

Mission Statement

Whitstable Junior School does not support the routine use of physical interventions with children. We are committed to ensuring that all our children and staff are able to live and work in a supportive and caring environment, demonstrating a mutual respect, so that teaching and learning can take place in order to maximise children's potential and achievement.

In the rare circumstances that it becomes appropriate to use physical intervention, it will be used as an act of care and not punishment, and staff will follow the guidelines outlined below. Staff are required, whilst taking any of the action detailed in this policy, to ensure that the child understands that this is a last resort and that the security of the child should be continually maintained.

Circumstances where physical Intervention might be appropriate

The Department for Education Non statutory Guidance was issued in July 2013. It states the following:

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

The Department for Education states that schools can use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- Prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- Prevent a pupil from attacking another member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

It may be necessary to engage in physical interventions to move a child in the above situations, but only when all other possible tactics outlined in our behaviour policy have been tried. In either of these cases, physical interventions will be limited to a request to leave the classroom and then physical presence only (i.e. a blocking stance with the use of arms to direct the child to the door).

A member of staff will sometimes need to rely on their professional judgement about whether or not to physically intervene by placing her/himself in a hazardous situation, or stand back and by that allow a child or colleague to face a potential hazard. Staff must balance the level and duration of their intervention against the seriousness and likely consequences of the incident.

Procedures for staff before and during any physical intervention

Before physically intervening, staff will:

- remain calm and attempt to engender calm
- tell the child to stop and explain to them what will happen if they do not
- use a range of non-physical alternatives aimed at calming or defusing situations in order to prevent further escalation.

These might include:

- continuing to speak and listen to the child/children
- employing an appropriate level of eye contact during any dialogue
- diverting, distracting, cajoling or humouring the child where appropriate
- reasoning with and offering appropriate choices to the child/children

Sometimes a teacher should not intervene in an incident without help. For example, when dealing with physically large children, or with groups of children, or if the teacher believes he or she may be at risk of injury. The teacher should remove other children who may be at risk and summon assistance from a colleague or colleagues, or where necessary telephone the police. The teacher should tell the child/children that he or she has sent for help. Until assistance arrives the teacher should continue to attempt to defuse the situation by talking to the children and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

Whilst physically intervening, staff will:

- use the minimum amount of force required to achieve the desired result
- tell the child that physical restraint will stop as soon as it is no longer necessary
- continue to use a range of non-physical alternatives aimed at calming or defusing situations in order to prevent further escalation, as above.
- remove the rest of the class when a child persistently refuses to leave or offers any kind of resistance to being removed from a classroom.

Communication with the child concerned can continue in isolation.

Ways in which staff may use reasonable force

Whilst there is no legal definition of reasonable force, DFE Guidance July 2013 advises that 'The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point during their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.'

During a potentially dangerous situation staff may be required to:

- physically step in between children
- block a child's path
- hold a child
- lead a child by the hand or arm
- guide a child away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- In more extreme circumstances use more restrictive holds.

Staff are not permitted to act in a way that might cause injury, for example by:

- holding a child round the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might
- restrict the child's ability to breathe
- slapping, punching, pushing, pulling or kicking a child
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- tripping up a child
- holding or pulling a child by the hair or ear
- Holding a child face down on the ground.

The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Physical force cannot be justified in a situation that could clearly be resolved without force, for example to prevent a child from committing a trivial offence.

Staff who are permitted to use reasonable force to control or restrain children

Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 permits adults who have lawful charge or control of children to use reasonable force to control or restrain them. These include:

- teachers
- learning mentors
- teaching assistants
- midday supervisors

Training

Our school will ensure that all permanent and long term supply staff have access to this policy and understand it.

Our school aims to identify, address and review the training needs of school staff, with a view to developing a shared awareness of:

- how and when to intervene
- how to prevent, defuse and/or resolve disputes, including the appropriate use of anger management, de-escalation and conflict resolution skills and techniques.

Appropriate training will be provided to all school-based staff, in line with the Local Authority's policy and guidelines.

Planning for the needs of individual children

Our school aims to identify, in consultation with parents/carers, any child whose behaviour is potentially thought to require a physical intervention response, and to consider the needs of those children in relation to:

- any individual medical, social, behavioural, learning or cultural factors
- any Individual Provision Plans, Pastoral Support Programmes or Personal Education Plans which support the children.

If a member of staff thinks that a particular child may at some time need such intervention, the circumstances and requirements will be presented for discussion at an appropriate meeting of relevant staff.

Other physical contact with children

Our school believes that some use of appropriate, positive physical contact with children can contribute to its development as a safe and friendly school. Some physical contact may be necessary or unavoidable when staff are working with:

- younger children who may need encouraging or guiding
- children with special educational needs who may need physical prompts or help
- children requiring first aid
- children receiving coaching in sport or as part of another curriculum activity
- children in distress.

Our staff will make professional and sensitive judgements about the nature and extent of their physical contact with children. We will take into account cultural sensitivities and gender differences, the needs of all children who may be particularly vulnerable following previous trauma or abuse.

Record-keeping

Our school keeps a record of all incidents where physical intervention involving the use of force against resistance from a child has been necessary. Staff will complete a written record on CPOMS under the 'Positive Handling Incident' category. This will be discussed with the Senior Leadership Team who will also decide how and when to report the incident to the children's parent/carer.

If the incident included a physical or verbal assault on a teacher/adult or another child, a KCC Accident/Incident Form must be completed. The teacher/adult involved may seek guidance from a senior colleague and/or their trade union representative before filling in their report.

We will discuss the incident with any children or staff who were present and, where appropriate, collect a written account from them. In line with our commitment to working with parents, we aim to maintain an open discussion during any relevant procedure which may follow an incident. We will regularly review the number and type of incidents in which physical intervention has been necessary. This will be used to ensure that there is adherence to this policy and to identify improvement needed in other policies and procedures of the school.

Sharing of information

All members of the school community should know of the existence of this policy. In principle, as few people as possible should know of any specific incident and staff should maintain confidentiality to the greatest possible extent. This is to enable governors and staff involved in any consequence or complaint to do so without having acquired hearsay knowledge.

Complaints

Complaints following a dispute about the use of physical intervention by an adult should, in the first instance, be referred to the headteacher. This will generally result in an investigation, which will take account of the written or verbal reports which have been collected.

Where disputes cannot be resolved informally within school or by the governors, complaints should be pursued in accordance with the school's complaints procedures.

Implementation, monitoring and review

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- ensuring that all staff are familiar with the school policy
- ensuring that all relevant staff have received training in non-physical interventions in order to reduce the need for physical intervention
- ensuring that named personnel have received training in physical intervention techniques
- monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the school's policy.

Appendix A

Guidelines for short-term supply and casual staff and other adults authorised by the headteacher to work with children at Whitstable Junior School

Physical intervention must never be used as a punishment.

- It should only be used if there is an immediate danger to children, staff or school property.
- It must only be used if all other tactics have failed.
- Any force used in a physical intervention must be of minimum strength and duration to deal with the immediate danger.
- Send for help as soon as you can, probably using another child to do so.
- Be careful how you handle a child. Never hold them by the neck, collar, ear or hair. Do not slap, punch, kick or trip them. Do not twist limbs, force limbs against the joint or hold a children face down on the ground. Avoid contact with breasts, bottoms and genital areas.
- Talk to the children; explain that physical contact will cease as soon as they calm down.
- Keep yourself and other children safe – it might be better to remove other children than to try to physically intervene with the aggressor.
- Do not put yourself at risk by confronting children who are bigger/stronger than you, who are armed or who otherwise pose a threat to your safety.

All incidents of physical intervention must be reported to the headteacher within one day, and should be written up immediately. Seek advice following an incident from a senior colleague and/or your trade union representative.

If a physical or verbal assault has occurred, the KCC Accident/Incident Form must be completed.